

# THE WILSON BULLETIN

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## EDITORIAL

The Chicago meeting was held as scheduled on November 26-27, at the Chicago Academy of Sciences. The figures are not at hand but there can be little doubt that the attendance exceeded that of any previous meeting. The program was carried out almost precisely as previously announced. The mornings and afternoons of Friday and Saturday were devoted to the regular program of papers. On Friday evening an open public meeting was held in Fullerton Hall, of the Art Institute, with Dr. Lynds Jones presiding. Mr. S. Prentiss Baldwin at this time presented the motion pictures showing the life history of the House Wren. The banquet was held on Saturday evening at the Parkway Hotel. Dr. W. D. Richardson, acting as Toastmaster, called upon a number who were present, including Mr. Ruthven Deane, the recognized dean of ornithologists in Chicago. On Sunday one party was conducted to the Bird Sanctuary in Lincoln Park, while another group assembled at the Field Museum of Natural History. There are some very fine bird groups here, but, apparently, ornithology has not been featured as much as have some other departments of the Museum. The Museum is housed in a magnificent building. The guards told us that afternoon that more than five thousand people had entered the building since it was opened in the morning. Presumably most of these people were still present, since a cafeteria is operated for the convenience of visitors; and yet the halls and corridors were not crowded with this great number of people.

At the business meeting it was voted to incorporate the Club immediately, in order to be prepared to begin active solicitation of the endowment fund. The plan of the Endowment Committee was adopted practically as presented, which provides for the selection of a corporate trustee, who shall hold and invest the principal of the fund, turning over to the officers of the Club at intervals the accrued interest. It is also provided that a committee of the Club shall act in advisory, not mandatory, capacity in the investment of the funds. There may be a few minor changes necessary before the document is signed, but in its fundamental aspects the matter has been arranged, now awaiting only the action of the officers in carrying out the details. With the situation thus developed there should be no hesitancy on the part of those so inclined in providing for bequests, or in making immediate donations. Dr. Lynds Jones was elected as President, and Prof. J. W. Stack was made Treasurer for the ensuing year. The meeting was a complete success from every angle, and our Chicago

constituency is deserving of our cordial thanks and congratulations. The proceedings will be regularly published in the March number of the WILSON BULLETIN.

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The Chicago meeting was strongly flavored with bird banding, as was also the Kansas City meeting. This has been a matter of some concern to some of those officials who are responsible for things. It has been the desire to keep the program in what might be called a balanced condition, not too heavy with any particular phase of ornithology. And this is a very laudable desire. But we believe that one thing was brought out on this subject at the recent meeting, if it had not been noted before. This one conclusion is that bird banding is not an end or a goal in itself, but is simply a novel method which has been added to the armamentarium of the ornithologist for the solution of his general problems. The bird banders themselves have been the first to realize this.

The striking fact has been that while our recent meeting has been notable for the number of banding papers on the program, yet, and this is the striking fact, there has been no monotony whatever in their presentations. There has been as much variety in the papers presented as before the banding method occupied our attention. One bander has investigated plumage changes, another has confined his attention to the study of body temperatures; another has learned interesting facts concerning mating and domestic relations among birds; still others are interested in the many phases of the migration problem; and thus the list of problems attacked by the bird bander might be greatly extended.

But, let it be observed, these problems are the same ones which the ornithologist has faced from the beginning. We therefore seem to be confronted with the fact that the bird banders are not a class *sui generis*, but are ornithologists with a new method of attacking their problems. This discovery clears the atmosphere. This being the case why should the bird banders have their "day," while others hold their distinctly labeled meeting? After the facts have been established it will matter little whether they were discovered by means of the shotgun, or by means of the trap.

The bird bander realizes the wealth of opportunity which lies within his reach, and is enthusiastic about it. He wishes for the work to proceed faster, and he longs for more helpers. He is anxious to present his case to the skeptics and the cynics, in order that he may win converts to his methods. He has the confidence and enthusiasm of achievement to hold him at his task. To the hard-boiled skeptic there is something suspicious or mysterious about the bird banders' enthusiasm. The hum drum routine of the staid laboratory worker does not furnish much excitement or enthusiasm until he stumbles upon some important discovery; then, usually, his human nature is expressed. A scientific fact is never discounted by intelligent men because it was discovered by an enthusiastic worker. Men of action are often emotional. Cynics usually have their emotions well submerged. Men of intelligence can distinguish fact from fancy, and are not blinded or misled by the incidental personal element.

We are not sure how much professional training should be demanded of the bird bander. Certainly he should have the training necessary for the work at hand. But how much is that? How much training is necessary for the banding of birds? We would say that he should have enough training to insure the

accurate identification of the birds handled. If he is to interpret results that may be a different matter; but every bander is not called upon to interpret results.

We believe, therefore, that bird banding is an established method of bird study; and that it will assist tremendously in the solution of those problems where the identification of the individual bird is required. The bird bander is an ornithologist, generically speaking; the ornithologist is a potential bird bander, and should at least be sympathetic with the banding method, and interested in the scientific results obtained by that method. More progress will be made if these groups commingle at our meetings and on our programs. The sequestration of the bird banders on the programs will not mean progress.

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The dues for 1927 should be sent to the newly elected Treasurer, Prof. J. W. Stack, Michigan Agricultural College, East Lansing, Michigan.

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## GENERAL NOTES

Conducted by M. H. Swenk

**The Black-bellied Plover in Oklahoma.**—On August 18, 1925, an American Black-bellied Plover (*Squatarola squatarola cynosurae*) was identified by me at Gate, in northwestern Oklahoma. This species has not previously been recorded from this State. The plover was on a shallow fresh-water pond and was sufficiently tame to afford a splendid opportunity for observation and identification. The distinguishing white base of the upper tail coverts was plainly visible. It was under observation for about half an hour and permitted the observer to approach within twenty-five or thirty feet. Then it would fly up, and, giving its characteristic whistle, circle above the water and again settle down and resume its business of picking up insects on the pond.—WALTER E. LEWIS, *Gate, Okla.*

**Aerial Maneuvers of Migrating White Pelicans.**—On September 21, 1926, as I was coming up the street at 4 P. M., I noted several people looking up at the skies, and, on searching for the reason, I discovered a vast concourse of what I took to be White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). I did not have my binoculars. The sheriff was standing near me and was looking at them. I asked him, "How many are there?" After scanning the milling mass for a few seconds, he said, "A thousand." They were too numerous to get anywhere near to one mass, but by gathering in layers there would be, say, three hundred swirling about in one crowd; a hundred feet below them another such crowd, and another hundred feet further down, another huge mass. They would be milling around in different directions. Maybe the upper mass would all wheel to the east; just as the middle mass would swing to the north, and the lower be moving to the west, marching and countermarching, for fifteen minutes. Then they seemed to break into separate flocks, heading off to the south in a V-shaped army.—LEROY TITUS WEEKS, *Tabor, Iowa.*

**The Pileated Woodpecker in Tuscarawas County, Ohio.**—Another rare nesting bird in Ohio, the Pileated Woodpecker (*Phloeotomus pileatus abieticola*), seems to be gaining in numbers in this county. A pair nested near our home in 1920. This nest was about fifty feet up in a green ash tree that stood about